

State  
of  
Vermont

Department  
of  
Human  
Resources

## Individual Highlights:

From the Commissioner	1-2
Labor Relations	2
Labor Relations	3
What can we do for you?	4
Recruitment Services	4
Wellness Updates	5
Welcome, EAP, Survey	6

Editor:

Karin Pelletier

## From the Commissioner - David K. Herlihy

Greetings to all our HR Partners:

In past editions I have used this space to touch on specific HR issues that you might find helpful. This time, rather than picking a specific issue, I want to focus on DHR, providing an update about some of the projects that we are working on. First, along with the Payroll Division of Finance & Management, we are headed toward 100% Direct Deposit and Electronic Pay Advices. I won't repeat our recent communications on the subject, but the short version is that both are still coming and we continue to need your help to make these changes happen. Please do your best to help employees get onto Employee Self Service. Information sessions have been presented around the state, and we will be distributing additional training materials. Your efforts can help our Help Desk employees avoid being flooded with calls.

In addition to trying to meet the Direct Deposit and Electronic Pay Advice requirement, DHR and F&M are beginning another joint project, a major upgrade to HCM and VISION. That project will last more than a year, and will put demands on many of you, as well as DHR and F&M staff. We believe that the result will be significant improvements in the way we capture payroll information and enhance the functionality of HCM and VISION. I expect that every one of our HR Partners will be asked to support the project in some way, from becoming a member of a team that focuses on the project throughout its span, to lesser roles such as being interviewed about your department's needs. The demands will be high, but we believe the payoffs will be, too.

Another special project is a revision of our DHR website. Everything will be updated as we make the transition to a new web platform. We apologize if some of our current content is getting a bit out of date – the focus now is on preparing the new site, not maintaining the content that will be replaced in coming weeks.

One of our *least* favorite projects is processing RIFs, but working together with you to properly handle these very trying events is so important. Most of you have probably heard about the closing of the Dale Correctional Facility in Waterbury, which will result in RIF for several employees. That big event, and the several isolated RIFs that have unfortunately had to occur, place additional demands on Labor Relations, Recruitment, and Benefits staff members, who, along with you, all try to ensure that RIF employees are dealt with in a manner that makes the best of a painful process.

Of course, in addition to those special projects, we will be dealing with all our usual events, such as open enrollment for benefits during November and flu shots, etc. Why am I telling you all this? In part to brag, because I am really proud of the DHR staff – sometimes I am amazed at everything they can accomplish. Also to ask for your patience – we are stretched a bit thin with all this going on. And finally, to ask for you to be active and involved. As with most everything we do, success requires a strong partnership between this organization and “the field.” As we face all these challenges, your assistance is even more critical. Be open to working on the HCM upgrade, and make sure your department's needs are considered when it's time for input. Please do your best to support the Direct Deposit /Pay Advice project, whether it's helping employees figure out Employee Self Service, or just being positive about the changes. With your continued hard work and support, we will successfully meet all these challenges.

## Labor Relations

### Alternate Work Schedule vs. Reduced Work Schedule

When an employee requests an “**Alternate Work Schedule**” s/he is seeking to work a schedule that varies from the standard 7:45 – 4:30 schedule five days a week. Most frequently LR sees requests for employees who seek to work ten hours in each day, four days a week. But whatever the proposed schedule is, the total number of hours must be forty per week or eighty per pay period (depending on whether the employee is exempt for FLSA purposes or not).

For an employee to request an Alternate Work Schedule, s/he must fill out the appropriate request form (you will find it in the DHR website Forms Library) which requires the employee to specify what their alternate schedule would look like for each day of the week (including their lunch break). [Note: It doesn't matter if an employee wants to work two hours or twelve hours in one particular day – they *must* indicate a period of time for their lunch break for each day.] It is required that the employee request changes at least two weeks in advance of when they would like to begin the Alternate Work Schedule.

For the request to be reviewed by LR, it needs to be filled out completely and be signed by all parties (employee, supervisor, appointing authority, and department HR administrator). A member of the LR staff looks at the employee's pay grade, proposed alternate schedule, bargaining unit, current overtime category and makes a determination about what the new overtime category and daily hour limit will be. If

approved, an email is sent to the employee's HR administrator with a copy to DHR HRIS. The approved Alternate Work Schedule request form is then forwarded to VSEA for their review. It is then up to the HR administrator to insert the records for the employee in HCM and notify the employee that their alternate work schedule has been approved.

When an employee seeks to voluntarily reduce their work schedule to anything less than forty hours in a week or eighty hours in a pay period, s/he is requesting a “**Reduced Work Schedule**”. The employee should put his/her request for a Reduced Work Schedule in writing and this request should be reviewed by the employee's supervisor, the department HR administrator, and the appointing authority. If approved by the appointing authority, the HR administrator need only send an email to LR to verify what the appropriate overtime category and daily hour limit should be. LR will provide guidance to the HR administrator and will copy DHR HRIS. The department HR administrator is then able to insert a record modifying the employee's FTE and make any necessary changes to the overtime category, work schedule, and daily hour limit. The HR administrator should also retain copies of the written request and approval for the Reduced Work Schedule in case any questions arise at a later date.

Of course, an involuntary reduction in scheduled hours would be a RIF and processed accordingly.

### PRINTED CONTRACTS AVAILABLE SOON

A limited number of printed copies of the July 1, 2008 – June 30, 2010 collective bargaining agreements (contracts) have just been received and will be distributed to HR Partners soon. In light of the fact that the contracts are available online at: [http://www.vermontpersonnel.org/employee/labor\\_cba.php](http://www.vermontpersonnel.org/employee/labor_cba.php), the large number of unused booklets left over when we printed the 2005 – 2007 contracts, and budgetary constraints, we have significantly reduced the number of copies printed this time. This should be a sufficient number to allow Partners to distribute contracts to new hires, and have “office” copies available for general reference when access to the popular on-line version is not possible. The Labor Relations Division will be working on distributing copies to the various departments over the next several weeks, and will be in contact with HR Administrators to make arrangements to get a supply of contracts to you.

In an effort to save trees and money, the font size for the new contract booklets is somewhat smaller than it has been in the past, resulting in the contracts having about half the number of pages as in the past. While there may be some complaints about the size of the print, it should be pointed out that the new contract books are much better, and more useful, than the 2007 – 2008 contracts ever were.



## More Labor Relations...

### Parental Leave Q&A

A classified employee who has successfully completed original probation or an employee who has worked for twelve months and for at least 1250 hours in the twelve month period, prior to the use of the leave, is eligible for Family Medical Leave and/or Parental Leave (FMLA/PFLA) in accordance with policy, contract, state and federal law.

An eligible employee is entitled to take up to twelve weeks of Family Medical Leave, up to sixteen weeks of Parental Leave, or a combination of both in a twelve month period. The twelve month period begins when the employee's leave is first designated as FMLA/PFLA.

Upon request, Parental Leave may be extended by the appointing authority for up to an additional two months.



1. **QUESTION:** Can an employee spread Parental Leave over the course of the twelve month period?

**ANSWER:** Parental leave is “block” leave so there is no entitlement to use Parental Leave in an intermittent or reduced schedule fashion. However, the CBA (Article 35, Section 6, paragraph 2) allows the appointing authority to grant, at its discretion, a request for intermittent or reduced schedule Parental Leave.

2. **QUESTION:** Does the final decision to extend Parental Leave for the additional two months rest with the department or can it be overridden by management at the agency level, or by DHR?

**ANSWER:** Final approval for the administrative leave of absence rests with DHR. Any decision to override at the agency level would be subject to whatever the normal agency practice is for making those types of decisions. DHR would only intercede/reverse if there was a blatant violation of the CBA or law.

3. **QUESTION:** Is six weeks the maximum amount of sick leave an employee may use for Parental Leave, or can the employee continue to draw this down over the entire period of the Parental Leave?

**ANSWER:** For the first six weeks of leave the employee can use accrued leaves in any combination they want, and may even go off-payroll. After the first six weeks of leave they are limited to using compensatory time, personal leave and annual leave, in that order. Employees who are approved for more than one FMLA/PFLA leave in a twelve month period may use any type of leave – or go off-payroll – **ONLY** for the first six weeks in the aggregate.

Beyond the first six weeks of FMLA/PFLA leave, the employee is normally only able to utilize sick leave if they are sick or, they may use up to 10 days of sick leave if the child was sick.

If you have questions about Family Leave or Parental Leave, please contact the Labor Relations Division at 828-2972 or 828-3454.

**Save the Date!**  
**October 21, 2008, 1:00 – 4:00**  
**HR Partners Meeting**  
**Hazen's Notch**  
**The Summit, Waterbury**

## What Can We Do For You?

### DHR Legal Services Division

The Legal Services Division is responsible for providing legal advice to State agencies and departments on wide range of labor and employment matters. The Assistant Attorney General's assigned to the Division represent the State in labor and employment cases before the Vermont Labor Relations Board, Vermont Human Rights Commission, State and Federal Courts including the Vermont Supreme Court. We work closely with the Labor Relations Division and HR staff to guide state entities through the discipline and corrective action processes. The Legal Services Division also conducts investigations of employee misconduct and other employment related matters.

#### The DHR Legal Team includes:

Chris Boraker  
Mary Puro  
Bill Reynolds  
Julio Thompson  
Margaret Vincent



## Recruitment Services

### COORDINATED ADVERTISING PROGRAM UPDATE

This is to advise you and your hiring managers of the new advertising practice that the Burlington Free Press (BFP) recently implemented. The BFP has transformed its job listings to make job searching and recruiting easier. Their innovative, easy-to-scan format boasts a clean design that helps readers quickly identify opportunities of interest. The BFP believes that ads will reach more readers that are actively seeking a new job.

In the past, the State of Vermont's Coordinated Advertisement was published in both the Sunday edition of the BFP as well as in the "Business Monday" section of the Monday paper. Effective August 24, 2008, the State of Vermont's Coordinated Ad will now appear in the Sunday classified section of the BFP only. The BFP is no longer posting employment ads in their Monday paper. Due to these changes, the cost of placing a Coordinated Ad with the BFP will decrease.

Additionally, the BFP partners with careerbuilder.com to post its employment classified ads online. In lieu of publishing employment ads on Mondays, the "Business

Monday" now contains a "Quick Find Section" for readers to easily scan job titles for positions that are posted on careerbuilder.com. Placing an advertisement on careerbuilder.com is an economical way for departments to reach a wide variety of applicants over a 30 day posting period. It is important for hiring managers to recognize that placing a position in the Coordinated Ad will not automatically be posted on careerbuilder.com. A separate request to post the ad on careerbuilder.com must be submitted to the DHR Recruitment Services Division for posting.

As a general reminder, there are separate instructions for posting ads with the Coordinated Ad program and on careerbuilder.com. All ad requests must be submitted to [DHR-AdRequests@state.vt.us](mailto:DHR-AdRequests@state.vt.us). The deadline for submitting newspaper ads is close of business on Tuesdays. Ads for careerbuilder.com may be submitted at any time.

Please feel free to contact your respective Department of Human Resources Recruiter with any questions regarding the posting of advertisements.

## Updates from the Wellness Division

### Are you more active than a Vermont farmer?

October 6 - December 28

The VT State Employees' Wellness Program joins the Department of Health as they launch the community website *Get Moving Vermont*.

- Participate with friends and family. The Fall challenge will be available on both the State employee and community websites.
- Track your progress on the virtual route around Vermont.
- Race with Vermont farmers, who will be logging their activity.
- Participate in weekly raffle drawings!

#### INTERESTED?

- If you are already registered, you are all set! We will start logging activity as of September 29<sup>th</sup> for this challenge.
- If you are not registered:
  - Go to [www.getmoving.vermont.gov](http://www.getmoving.vermont.gov)
  - Click "Yes" to indicate you are a State Employee
  - Click "Not registered?" and you will be led through the registration process.
- Invite your friends or family members to join you. If they are not State employees, they can register by clicking "No" on the first page.

The challenge route will be available for a sneak peak on September 23.  
Check out the route and learn about the farmers before the challenge begins!



Vermont State Employees' Wellness Program  
Call Sasha Kohnowich at (802) 241-1563

Fall is here and with it comes the change in weather,  
colorful foliage, and THE FLU!

Protect yourself, your family, your friends and your co-workers...

### GET YOUR FLU SHOT!

The State flu shots are being offered to all Vermont State Employees: Active, Retirees, & Temps

Visit [www.vermontpersonnel.org](http://www.vermontpersonnel.org) and click on the link.

Registration is on-line at [www.healthychievers2.com/vt](http://www.healthychievers2.com/vt).

We appreciate it if you can assist any employees who do not have computer access.

All directions on how to register and the info needed are on our website.



### **DHR Administrative Services Welcomes Jennifer Hudgins!**

Recently, Jennifer Hudgins joined DHR's Administrative Services Division as a Health Benefits Analyst. The position is responsible for analyst tasks and projects for Administrative Services and the Benefits Unit. Jennifer relocated to Vermont from Richmond, Virginia where she was born and raised. Previously in Richmond she worked as a project manager for Virginia Commonwealth University where she also earned her BS and MS degrees. DHR is thrilled to have Jennifer on board!



## **The Department of Human Resources**

Office of the  
Commissioner  
110 State Street  
Montpelier, VT  
05620-3001

PHONE:  
(802) 828-3491

FAX:  
(802) 828-3409

We're on the Web!  
*See us at:*

[www.vermontpersonnel.org](http://www.vermontpersonnel.org)

### **Stress in the Workplace?**

Consider making a referral or consulting with Invest EAP, the State of Vermont's Employee Assistance Program. Employees or members of their household may call at any time (888-834-2830).

Confidential EAP services are available at no cost to employees and include short-term counseling, assessment and comprehensive resources and referral information. Managers and Supervisors can also contact EAP for guidance on working with employees who might be in need of extra support or assistance with work or personal issues.

### **DISABILITY & DIVERSITY SURVEY**

The Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation conducted a survey in 2003 to help the state understand the most effective ways to address disability and diversity in the workplace. DHR and the Governor's Workforce Equity and Diversity Council are working with VocRehab to send a 2008 version of this survey and request your input before doing so. Please understand that the best comparative value will result from the fewest changes made to the existing survey but that it is also important to ask the most helpful questions. Keeping that in mind, please find below a link to the analysis report for our last Vermont State Employee Disability and Diversity Survey:

<http://www.dail.state.vt.us/dvr/vocrehab/vwii/assets/docs/VT%20State%20Employee%20Disability%20and%20Diversity%20Survey%20Report.pdf>

This online PDF file may be too large to be opened from within our e-mail system, so users will need to copy and paste the above link into the address bar of their internet browsers, and then hit return to open the file.

If you have any suggestions that you think will add greater value to the survey results, please email them to [Doreen.Marquis@state.vt.us](mailto:Doreen.Marquis@state.vt.us). We may not be able to incorporate everyone's changes. Thanks for your assistance.